(c) Efforts are being made to protect the forest and wildlife with the help of forest staff. In these areas, the support of local communities for protection and management is ensured through eco-development committees, tiger tracking forces etc.

(d) and (e) For protection and management of forest and wildlife, following steps have been taken by the Government of India and State/UT Governments-

- Legal protection measures like Indian Forest Act, 1927, Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972 etc. are in place.
- Financial measures, like providing assistance to the States/Union Territories under Centrally Sponsored Scheme *i.e.* Integrated Forest Protection Scheme, Development of National Park and Sanctuaries, Project Tiger, Project Elephant, etc.
- Constant patrolling of the area including flying squads, mobile protection units etc.
- Creation of check posts and barriers.
- Involvement of local communities through Joint Forest Management Committees/ Eco-development committees etc.
- The Central Bureau of Investigation has been empowered under the wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972 to apprehend and prosecute wildlife offenders.
- The Wildlife Crime Control Bureau has been setup for control of poaching and illegal trade in wildlife and its products.

UNESCO notice to Bharatpur sanctuary

1445. SHRI EKANATH K. THAKUR: Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that more than 40,000 pelicans, flamingos, Siberian Cranes and other migratory birds that made the Keoladeo National Park of Rajasthan in Bharatpur their annual winter retreat, have now altered their flight plans;

(b) whether it is also a fact that this prompted the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) to issue a notice to Bharatpur sanctuary that it would withdraw its world heritage status if the same situation continues, and

(c) if so, the steps Government propose to take to restore the wetland character of park?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS (SHRI S. REGUPATHY): (a) It is true that during the years 2006-07 and 2007-08, Keoladeo National Park of Rajasthan in Bharatpur have been visited by comparatively lesser number of migratory birds with that of the previous years. However, it is mentioned that Sibrerian cranes have not visited the Keoladeo National Park after 2001-02.

(b) The World Heritage Committee in their meeting held during 2005 at Durban, expressed serious concern over the situation of Keoladeo National Park resulting from inadequate availability of water to maintain the wetland ecosystem. In their next meeting held at Vilnius, Lithuania, in 2006, the World Heritage Committee sought an updated, comprehensive report on the state of conservation of the World Heritage property along with the requested to implement long term solutions for water problem of the Park.

(c) The steps taken to restore the wetland character of the Park are as given below:

(i) The Ministry of Environment & Forests has been providing financial & technical assistance to the State Government for the better management of Keoladeo National Park. An amount of Rs. 26.3472 lakhs has been released during the current financial year under the centrally Sponsored Scheme "Assistance to Development of National Parks & Sanctuaries".

(ii) An UNESCO funded project has been launched for better management of Keoladeo National Park.

(iii) The State Government has completed the Chiksana Canal project, which would draw 50-60 Mcft. flood water to Keoladeo National Park during the monsoon period.

(iv) Two more projects, *viz,* Govardhan Drain project and Dholpur-Bharatpur Chambal drinking water project have also been prepared by the State Government to mitigate the water scarcity in Keoladeo National Park.

(v) To address the emergency situation, four new deep bore wells and two new shallow bore wells have been dug inside the Park.

Increase in deforestation

1446. SHRI C. PERUMAL: Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that there is a steep increase in deforestation in the country;

(b) if so, the average percentage of deforestation taken place for the last three years, State-wise;

(c) the present total area of forest, State-wise;

(d) the steps taken by Government to protect forest and fiscal allocation for this purpose during the last and current year; and

(e) the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS (SHRI S. REGUPATHY): (a) No, Sir. There is no increase in the deforestation in the country. An assessment of the forest cover in the country is made by the Forest Survey of India, Dehradun on biennial basis. The forest cover in the country as per 2001, 2003 and 2005 assessment is given below:

Assessment Year	2001	2003	2005
Forest Cover (in km^2)	653,898	677,816	677,088

It can be seen that the forest cover in the country has increase by 23,918 km^2 between 2001 and 2003 assessments, and decreased marginally by 728 km^2 between 2003 and 2005 assessments.